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POLITICAL

Electioneering Campaigns Draw to Close

The final phase of electioneering campaigns by the principal political parties has been entered, and they each hope to be successful in electing representatives to the new regional and central governments which will emerge under the new constitution. Much malice, mud-slinging, jealousy, and tribalism have been introduced into the campaigns at all levels, and there is some bitterness and much confusion among the people.

The Action Group has a fairly well defined program and has published numerous policy papers containing its views on subjects of general interest. The NCNC does not have a definite program. It, however, advocates nationalism and immediate self government, which platforms appeal to a large share of the masses. Many are expected to support NCNC because they are opposed to the regionalism advocated by the Action Group. However, because of election regulations it does not appear that any one political party can record a sweeping majority.

Dr. Nnamdi AZIKIWE and his touring party of NCNC politicians returned to Lagos on July 20, 1951. An impressive welcoming reception was accorded and the delegates entered in a procession from a short distance of the city. The road along the way was crowded with observers.

Arrest of Pro-Communist Labor Leader

Mr. Nduka EZE, ex secretary of the Nigerian Labor Congress, secretary of the National Scholarship Board, secretary of the Amalgamated Union of United Africa Company African Workers, and reported to have served formerly as an official of the NCNC, was arrested between Idi Iroko and Cotonou, French Dahomey, on July 18, 1951, and returned to Lagos. He is charged with embezzling union funds and traveling on a forged passport. Another Nigerian with him, also traveling on the same class of passport, was likewise arrested.

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Earlier members of Eze's union had declared a vote of no confidence in him. The latter has already been found guilty in the passport matter and it is said that he will shortly be brought to trial on other charges. Eze resigned as paid General Secretary of the UAC Union on July 25, 1951, adding the statement: "I have not lost my hope in the ultimate triumph of the working class and my hopes of the U.A.C. Union as a forward-block are not distant". Eze told a reporter that while he had terminated all trade union movement, he would certainly continue to be interested in politics. He also stated that over £2,000 sterling had been contributed to his union through a man by the name of M. O. EZUMA who returned from Czechoslovakia early this year. This is referred to as the "Prague Money".

According to the press nobody in the labor world regrets the downfall of Eze who is stated to be an insincere trade unionist who exploited the workers for his own political ends. This is hailed by the press as a "lesson to irresponsible labor leaders who while professing to guard the workers' interests, in fact undermine them and seek to further their own personal interests".

British Passports Stolen.

Press reports during the past two weeks have indicated that a number of blank British passports are missing from the Passport Control Office in Lagos. It is presumed that these passports were removed illegally from the office by internal sources. British officials are concerned that some of these passports may have been used to enter Eastern Germany.

Last Meetings of Houses of Assembly.

During the period under review the three Regional Houses of Assembly met for the last time under the Richards Constitution. Several bills which are to be presented to the August meeting of the Legislative Council were discussed by the Assemblies and there was a general leave taking by the various members. The last meetings were of very short duration, lasting from two to three days, and nothing of any particular interest came up at them.

Regionalization Vs. All-Nigeria Government.

The most striking recent development in British policy has been the trend toward regionalization. The existing (1946) constitution aimed at unifying the country, while the new one, introduced by the present Governor, Sir John Macpherson, accepts the hypothesis that a tripartite regional organization is a more natural mold in which to cast Nigeria's future. This is because of the widely differing

characteristics of the three regions. The moslem north is highly conservative and quite aloof, and there is little disposition to merge with the South. In the Western Region the Yorubas have organized themselves on a regional basis and operate as a political party called the "Action Group", which may well be fairly successful in the forthcoming elections. The British maintain that the real impetus for political advance comes from the Eastern Region where the predominant tribe is the Ibo, which is hard-working, violent and progressive.

It is, of course, impossible to forecast the results of the polling for the new Constitution. The country is vast, the system of elections complicated, and there is no precedent to go on. There is little possibility of a single party sweeping the board, as happened in the Gold Coast.

As has been pointed out in previous reports, the NCNC political organization has urged that there be set up an all-Nigeria Government, while their main political opposition, the Action Group, favors regionalization. In that connection the NCNC has publicly drawn a parallel between Nigeria and the Gold Coast, arguing that if the latter could do without regionalization, Nigeria could likewise. If the Gold Coast can move rapidly toward self government by one method, the NCNC is reported to feel that Nigeria should use the same technique.

In above respect, the Action Group points out that the Gold Coast and Nigeria cannot be compared in all respects, the latter being an infinitely larger country in area and population. It is pointed out that Nigeria also has a much greater number of tribes and ethnic groups and that it is illogical to expect Nigeria and the Gold Coast to have the same forms of Government. Both Governments have, of course, much in common, particularly as respects their struggle for self government, but the Action Group feels that the methods of attaining this common goal cannot be the same.

On a recent visit here of the Gold Coast's Nkrumah, the latter criticized the regional system in Nigeria under the new constitution. This played into the hands of the NCNC which has long advocated an "all-Nigeria" program. The press states that Gold Coasters in Nigeria have cabled Nkrumah to stay out of Nigerian internal politics, but to cooperate with the majority party after the elections.

Possible Merger of Political Parties.

There has been some talk of a merger between the three principal political parties, NCNC, NPC, and Action Group, but it has been pointed out in the press that such a development would be

virtually impossible because of the ideological gulf between them.

Special Conditions in North.

Looking toward the forthcoming elections, there seems to have been little serious political activity in the Moslem North, no strong political party having emerged. This may mean that most of the Northern representatives finally chosen will be independents. Political evolution, thus, is expected to be along different lines from that of other regions, and it seems possible that elements from that area, unhindered by political doctrines and slogans, may possibly move toward national development in a more practical and positive manner than will be the case in other regions where political parties are better organized and have more influence.

Text of New Constitution.

With Despatch No. 28 of July 13, 1951, the Consulate General mailed to the Department 5 copies of the new Constitution promulgated on June 25, 1951. Its main features had already been discussed in detail in a number of earlier despatches. The Consulate General's latest comments were contained in Despatch No. 55 of July 23, 1951. In brief, the most arresting feature of the new Constitution is the large degree of autonomy granted to the three regions. However, regional legislation is still subject to the Governor's approval, and the latter's veto power always exists.

Elections Under New Constitution.

Registration of voters in connection with the forthcoming general elections under the new constitution for the Western House of Assembly has already taken place, with little active interest reported. Final elections will be held on September 24, 1951. For the Northern House of Assembly, subject to approval by the Governor, it is proposed to start primary elections on September 7, 1951. Meetings of the various electoral colleges will take place during the succeeding three months. Northern House of Assembly Electoral Regulations were published in Nigeria Gazette No. 37 of July 19, 1951. In the Eastern Region primary elections begin July 23, 1951.

Position of New Lieutenant Governors.

At the recent meeting of the Western House of Assembly it was announced that Sir Chandos Hoskyns-Abrahall, Chief Commissioner of the Western Provinces will shortly retire from the Colonial Service. Sir Chandos, who has been in the Colonial Service in Nigeria for 30 years has come up through the ranks, at one time being the Administrative Secretary and at various intervals acting Chief Secretary of Nigeria.

The position of Chief Commissioners will no longer exist under the new Constitution being replaced by regional Lieutenant Governors. The position of the Lieutenant Governors will be of greater importance than that of the previous Chief Commissioners owing to the devolution of many powers to the various regions of the country. It is therefore quite likely that these positions will be greatly sought after. It is probable that all of the three present Chief Commissioners will retire shortly, probably after serving for very short periods as Lieutenant Governors.

Criticisms of New Constitution.

There has been much criticism of the new Constitution by all of the leading African political parties and the press. Azikiwe's principal newspaper (West African Pilot) maintains that the object of the new Constitution is to de-Nigerianise the nation into three different entities, pointing out also that the Lieutenant Governors of the three regions can dissolve the Regional Assemblies at will. The constitutional clause stressing the acceptability of ministers by the regions is, according to the Zik Press, to empower the Lieutenant Governors to pick and choose "yes men". Such press adds that Nigeria is too grown up to be fooled by the idea of "consultation". Thus Azikiwe, his press, and his political party, the NCNC, have loudly rejected the fundamentals of the Constitution and would, apparently, tear it up. In fact after a considered evaluation of the document, the NCNC Cabinet has declared that it falls far short of the legitimate expectations of the people of Nigeria.

While the Action Group, the only other important political party at present, seems to have accepted the framework of the new Constitution, it, as a party, has recommended certain reforms in fairly mild language. However the "Nigerian Tribune", organ for the Action Group, has been more outspoken and critical. A recent editorial of the latter records its reaction to the new Constitution by declaring: "By the release of the legal instrument of the new Federal Constitution for Nigeria, we know precisely the utter disregard and disrespect the British Government in Nigeria have for the Nigerian intelligentsia and her teeming millions". The document was spoken of as "the mutilated Constitution" and the changes made in it by the Secretary of State for the Colonies were described as "the rape of the Constitution, without reference or consultation with the people of Nigeria". The same editorial continues as follows:

> "The series of discretionary powers vested in the Governor and the Lieutenant Governors in the Central and Regional legislatures constitute these three men absolute rulers- virtual dictators - in Nigeria. The most insulting and irritating aspect of the Constitution is that any measure, law or regulation relating to the civil servant, etc. can only be introduced

at the pleasure of the white Officials.

"As for the ministerial appointments the Constitution has made a mockery of them. Ministers will be appointed and dismissed at the pleasure of either the Governor or the Lieutenant Governors. This is a travesty of democracy. The British Government has certainly broken faith with Nigerians.

"Despite all the nauseating aspects of the Constitution we earnestly hope that the General Election shall be fought and won by all nationalists and a real fight for immediate Self-Government embarked upon."

"The Nigerian Statesman" comments thus: "What is this new Constitution? a revised edition, by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, of the recommendations of the Ibadan General Conference, with a new authorized version of the old Crown Colony system carefully brushed up to the color and vogue of 1951. Here we are dealing essentially with nothing more nor less than the present Richards Constitution with slightly increased functionaries, and with nominated African Ministers, without power and responsibility, being used for window dressing. What has happened is that the Governor has enlarged his Executive Council and given it a new name, - the Council of Ministers. But the portfolios of these so-called Ministers would be filled - not with policy - but with stereotyped matter ending up with dotted lines for the signatures of these glorified civil servants. At every turn one finds a backward step. By making the regions semi-autonomous their separatist tendency has been given a fillip. The dangers become more serious by the acrimony among the various leaders." The editorial ends by saying that most of the blame for the situation can be laid squarely at the door of the Africans, "which have a selfish and quarrelsome leadership with a notorious lack of vision and foresight, as well as moral strength to organize the people."

ECONOMIC

Farmers Demand £240 per ton for Cocoa.

Through the Press the Nigerian Farmers Union has demanded to receive £240 per ton for cocoa in the 1951/52 season, or double the present price for 1st quality cocoa. The Union states that this demand is made in view of increased production costs and because of the fact that the Cocoa Marketing Board has in its possession an accumulated profit of £20,000,000.

The Consulate General doubts that the price of cocoa will reach the figure desired, but it may well be increased substantially. Farmers will have a pressing need for cash before the new crop comes in, and for that reason it probably would be difficult to persuade them to withhold cocoa from the market. It is doubtful if the Board could afford an increase to the figure named because, if that were possible, its reserves would have to be much greater.

Marketing Company to Meet in Lagos.

The Nigeria Produce Marketing Company of London, which is the selling organization for the Nigeria Produce Marketing Boards, the organization which handles sales of 90% of Nigeria's produce in world markets, will hold its annual Board meeting in Lagos in early August. The Board has a majority of African members. Although the Company operates in London, its policy is shaped by the Nigerian Marketing Boards (cotton, cocoa, palm produce and oil seeds). One of its most important tasks will be a decision as to produce prices for the coming crop year.

New Oil Palm Institute.

The establishment of a West African Oil Palm Research Institute is the object of a bill to be entered at the next session of the Legislative Council later this year. The bill provides for the setting up of a management body to be known as the West African Oil Palm Research Management Committee. The Committee Chairman and the Institute Director are to be nominated by the Secretary of State for British Colonies. The Gold Coast and Sierra Leone Governments will be represented on the Committee. The new institute will take over existing research establishments, and Oil Palm research will now be on a West African scale and not confined solely to Nigeria. The Nigeria Oil Palm Produce Marketing Board has agreed to contribute toward the cost of endowment of the new institute, the same as the Cocoa Marketing Board has been helping to maintain the West African Cocoa Research Institute. Additional funds will be contributed by other British West African territories.

Crop Inspection Trainees.

The Produce Marketing Boards (cotton, cocoa, palm produce and oil seeds) which were organized to secure the farmer against uncertain marketing conditions, are making every effort to improve and maintain the quality of exported Nigerian products, through produce inspection services for grading and classification. To improve standards the Marketing Boards have started a new training scheme looking toward better produce inspection. That scheme comprehends the sending to United Kingdom groups of officers of the Produce Inspection Service for observation and study. There they visit

ports, factories, etc. in British cities and see exactly how Nigerian products arrive and are processed in Great Britain. One group of trainees has already returned to Lagos. Another group left Lagos by air for London on June 30, 1951, on a two months tour.

Air Services Increase.

It was announced that 11,000 air passengers entered and left Nigeria by air between April 1, 1949 and March 31, 1950, compared with 4,000 in the previous year. During this period 43,813.2 mail ton miles were flown in Nigeria.

Wharf Extension.

The work of increasing port facilities at Lagos, in connection with the Apapa Wharf extension plan is in progress, there being some 4½ years to go on the £2,500,000 project which began in April, 1950. When complete the new 2,500 foot wharf will have additional berthing space for 5 more ships, with new Customs and Railway sheds. The present limited capacity of the wharf has resulted in much port congestion at Lagos resulting in considerable financial loss, and in excessive turn-around periods.

Broadcasting Service to be Expanded.

The first experimental transmission in the Northern Provinces of the newly formed Nigerian Broadcasting Department took place. The experiment was successful although permanent service awaits the receipt of new equipment. The Broadcasting Department has ordered two transmitters, one of 20 kilowatts and one of 7½ kilowatts, which should be delivered by the end of 1952. The 20-kilowatt transmitter will be installed in Lagos and the 7½-kilowatt transmitter in the Northern Region. £190,000 has been granted under Colonial Development and Welfare, and the Nigerian Government is to grant about £150,000 for this scheme. When complete the Nigerian Broadcasting Service will cost about £100,000 a year and employ about 150 persons.

OTHER

Race Riot.

Recent publicity surrounding the calling out of the National Guard with drawn bayonets to quell a disturbance involving 4,000 white persons demonstrating against an attempt by a Negro to install himself and family in an apartment in Cicero, suburb of Chicago, has been given prominence in the press of Lagos. It appears that there were 17 hospital cases and 70 arrests during the

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riot. An editor's note to one press item on the above reads: "And yet the United States of America talks of a free world!"

Governor's Visits.

Governor Macpherson has recently toured Calabar Province to explain the administrative machinery set up by the Government to look into regional and central affairs. He has also just returned from a goodwill visit to Fernando Po Island, (Spanish) where he was greeted by many British West African workers employed on the Island.

A. W. Childs
American Consul General

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